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ABSTRACT

This was an experiment in increased cooperation between public universities and public schools in the area of teacher education. In 1971 and 1972, a large enrollment increase at Cleveland State University brought many additional full-time faculty appointments. This change in personnel put the College of Education in a better position to offer local schools more consultant and service help. A 2-day workshop was held at Cleveland State University on September 13 and 14, 1972; it was organized around the question, What is the role of this urban public university in serving the surrounding school system? Public school superintendents and representatives from local private universities having graduate programs in education were also invited to attend. There was a great deal of free, unforced interaction and exchange of ideas, and follow-up meetings were planned. (Specific Cooperative endeavors growing out of the conference are listed.) (JA)

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THE SCHOOL AND THE UNIVERSITY: ADVERSARIES OR PARTNERS?

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There are signs in Washington and around the nation that the teaching profession and the public schools are moving toward a considerable power struggle with institutions of higher learning over the control of the teacher education enterprise. Even now, the thrusts for power are only thinly veiled. And, in the main, efforts at resolving differences through negotiation leave scars of suspicion and hostility. Negotiations are band aids for open wounds caused either by open confrontation or by a sense of being exploited, either on the part of schools, the profession, or the universities themselves. The conflict-prone relationship is further aggravated by the fact that the division of state tax dollars inevitably pits the public universities against the public schools.

With sufficient enlightened self-interest, however, it should be possible for these public educational institutions to join, honestly and openly, in common cause to improve the quality of teacher education and of public instruction. That is what the following account is about. It is not a dramatic story of mature success. It is one, rather, which tells how some foundations have been laid to permit collaborative action between school systems and a public university in the Cleveland, Ohio area.

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The Cleveland area is not unlike many other metropolitan areas of the country. A large city with all of the problems confronting every large city and school district today--poverty, unemployment, decreasing tax base, deteriorating housing and racial strife--it is surrounded by 31 other school districts which vary from all black to all white student bodies, from very well-educated to very poorly educated adult populations, from very wealthy to very poor communities and from very urban to very rural settings.

Serving approximately 332,769 pupils, representing about 14% of all pupils in the State of Ohio, the 32 superintendents are joined together in a bond of mutual respect and concern for each other and the future of their school districts and the area. This bond is unusual because it brings together for search of solutions to mutual educational problems very different individuals including the superintendent of the largest city in Ohio who has many years of experience in urban education, a beginning superintendent of the smallest district in the state, a chief school administrator of the biggest all-white city in the United States, a suburban administrator with an almost all black student population, a superintendent whose district has the highest per-pupil cost in the state and a school executive whose students are annually among the leaders in National Scholarship examinations.

Despite enormous differences in experience, age, philosophy, responsibilities, and interest, the superintendents of the 32 public school districts in Cuyahoga County Ohio, have been meeting informally

for over two decades to discuss mutual concerns, problems and solutions. These monthly meetings have been held under the rubric of a loosely knit organization called the Cuyahoga County Superintendents Association.

Approximately nine years ago, some superintendents wanted to have their views expressed through a more structured organization, especially those concerning public educational issues and proposed state and federal school legislation. They also tried a few cooperative intra-district endeavors in such matters as group purchasing, data processing, special education, and management services because they believed that if such cooperative ventures were successful in stretching the taxpayer's dollar, the Ohio State Legislature might use them as models throughout the state.

Funding to support these activities was soon forthcoming from a local foundation. A full time executive secretary was employed to supervise these cooperative activities and six other school districts from neighboring counties were invited to join the association to broaden the base of influence beyond Cuyahoga County.

Early success with these programs led the superintendents and their boards of education to approve of a formal COMPACT organization which would establish plans for group purchasing, data processing, and other intra-district cooperative enterprises. As local foundation

funding was phased out after five years, the new organization obtained Title III funds to expand the special education programs and the data processing program.

Meanwhile, the Ohio State Legislature passed enabling legislation in 1964 creating an urban state university in the City of Cleveland. Cleveland State University, established as a successor to a small private undergraduate institution, Fenn College, was long overdue for a metropolis which had no public university to serve it. A College of Education was formed from a small department of education the following year. This new institution recorded enormous growth in students and facilities during the same period the Cuyahoga County Superintendents' Association and the COMPACT matured and developed in prestige and influence.

During the early years of the university's growth, there was very little formal communication between the university's College of Education and the local school districts. Although representatives with the CCSA attempted to make contact, personnel from the College of Education responded minimally because of inadequate staff. The sheer force of numbers of new students kept the faculty so busy teaching courses that they could not reach out to work directly with the school districts. Yet, this failure to respond caused some hostile feelings by superintendents who felt that Cleveland State University should be furnishing leadership and services to Cleveland area public schools. The feeling tended to persist through the period 1965-1970, although a few school districts did manage to get some joint projects underway on a modest scale.

In 1971 and 1972, a large enrollment increase at Cleveland State University brought many additional full-time faculty appointments. This change in personnel put the College of Education in a better position to offer local schools more consultant and service help.

Consequently the College of Education considered, anew, the questions: What is the role of this urban public university in serving the surrounding school systems? Can this role be constructively established with the local schools? If so, how?

To discuss these questions a two day workshop was held at Cleveland State University on September 13th and 14th, 1972. All superintendents of the Cuyahoga County Superintendents' Association were invited to attend and to bring other professional school personnel they chose from their schools. Representatives from area private universities which had graduate programs in education were also invited and a representative from the Cleveland Commission on Higher Education and the deans from all colleges at Cleveland State University attended. For two days, open and frank discussion was held between public school and university educators. There was a "no holds' barred" approach and all past and present grievances were stated. Large group meetings, panels, and small task force consensus groups were held during each session. Needless to say, the daily press was not called in to report on these sessions. This was not done as a "Public Relations Show," but as a sincere off-the-record effort to find common ground in purposes and to develop means for providing mutual educational assistance as needed and available.

The public school officials at the conference made it clear that the university's College of Education had some specific services that were needed. This was not a one way street, however, as university professors asked the local school superintendents for more help in certain areas. At the end of the first day and at the beginning of the second, the superintendents met to discuss what services the public schools could provide to the College of Education. This same process took place with a committee from the College of Education, analyzing what the departments could provide from the requests received.

Because the superintendents had developed, among themselves, a tradition of open and frank sharing of views as well as cooperating for the common good, the process of negotiating was more spontaneous for them than it appeared to be for the university officials. On the second day of the conference, a spokesman from each party presented what was feasible in the way of services from each group. From this input, a document was drawn up to include the conclusions from each side. One of these conclusions established a mechanism which would insure a continuous interplay between the Superintendents' Association and the College of Education.

Earlier, in preparation for the conference, the superintendents had established a liaison committee with the university. This committee was expanded to meet a concern of the superintendents to be involved in teacher education and administration training courses and programs at the university. The expansion called for the College of Education's

five departments - Basic Studies, Infant and Early Childhood Education, Secondary Education, and Educational Specialists to have a superintendent meet with them on a regular basis and be available for consultation assistance. The Undergraduate Affairs Council and Graduate Affairs Council also requested a superintendent be assigned to deliberate with them. This, too, was done.

Some of the cooperative programs established in local schools have university professors working as consultants. These will be expanded as added staffing from the University are provided.

A summary of the cooperative endeavors growing out of the conference include:

I. Field Experience for University Students:

-Need for greater number and more intensive field experiences within pre-service program.

-Need for a review of effects of field experience efforts.

-Need for follow-up on graduates.

-Need for competent supervisory staff.

The agreement provided that a Field Centered Development Team will, in collaboration with appropriate departments, review field experience programs. The next step will be a joint superintendent and university committee to review considerations of the Development Team.

II. In Service Activities for Teachers and Administrators:

-Need for in-service related to instructional program to be implemented for single school and/or multiple school need.

-Need for workshops and seminars in management problems in: negotiations, legislative matters, confrontations and staff development.

-Need for input from professional staff in field to assist in refinement of existing programs and in developing new programs.

In response to these needs it was agreed to assign a professor from each College of Education department to work with the public schools.

III. Racial and Ethnic Relations:

-Need for pre-service and in-service assistance.

The College of Education agreed to help with this concern, but it made no pretense in being expert on this problem area, although its faculty includes personnel recruited from school systems which have lived through the ordeal of wrestling with such issues. A joint superintendent and college committee will explore this further.

IV. Research:

-Need for newly obtained data on how and why children learn.

-Need for data on effectiveness of field-experience programs.

-Need for data on relationship of various graduate programs with success in teaching.

The College of Education will publish a newsletter summarizing research about school programs. The committee of superintendents and college personnel will develop this area further.

V. Miscellaneous:

-Need for graduate students to understand the "Politics of Institutions."

-Need for university staff to speak out on major issues confronting schools today.

-Need for college staff to serve as stimulants to community on new program possibilities.

-Need for university to serve as convener in bringing inter-governmental agencies together.

-Need for college to serve as conveners of educators with common consensus.

All of these areas will be explored. Some of them go beyond one department.

The College of Education expressed these considerations of the school system.

I. Communication

-Need to become aware of what is happening in the schools.

II. Field Experience

-Need for more effective field experience and practicum arrangements, for developing applied theory and professional competence.

III. Practice-Theory Dialogue

-Need for examination of present practices for theory generation purposes.

IV. Self-Renewal

-Need for schools to offer the staff the opportunity to "go back" to school, as "workers" instead of "consultants," in order to re-experience the classroom teaching situation in their areas of speciality. (Plans are afoot for all College of Education faculty to have such an opportunity in a five year cycle program.)

The superintendents through the newly established liaison committee will explore these needs and their implementation.

The self-renewal concept has obstacles such as salary differences, contracts, time in classroom, tort immunity, fringe benefits, etc.,

that will have to be examined in depth, but with the liaison committees and special arrangements in effect, it is now possible for the College of Education to develop "lead time" for these and other mutual needs and to respond to a variety of individual school requests.

This conference and the resulting negotiated cooperative endeavors were accomplished without seeking monetary assistance. The spirit of mutual need was too important to be put aside by taking the time for "grantmanship". It is evident, however, that some projects as listed in the foregoing will need money. Those endeavors that are agreed upon as most worthy will be analyzed as to what funding is needed and how best to seek the essential financing support.

Several methods of funding can be used, but consideration must first be given to the amount of involvement by the various school districts; the cost of professional services; the length of time for each project, and the possible need for supplies and equipment.

The important point is that the foundation for working together has been laid. Problems such as funding can be solved by this mutual trust and understanding.

The door has now been opened for all Cleveland area schools, universities, and related educational organizations to join together in establishing a model for problem-solving.

This two day off-the-record conference and follow-up meetings have demonstrated that it is indeed possible to negotiate the

roles of universities and local public schools - to the mutual benefit of each. The fruits of these efforts are in the future - next year and the year after - but we believe this tree of educational progress has taken deep root in fertile soil.